



City Hall
Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria Waterfront Committee
Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314



May 2, 2011

Mr. John Komoroske, Chair
Alexandria Planning Commission
City Hall
301 King Street, Room 2100
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Komoroske:

This letter summarizes the position of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee on the Waterfront Small Area Plan staff memorandum circulated for public review on April 22, 2011. As this letter describes, the Waterfront Committee objects to the removal of Fitzgerald Square from the foot of King Street from the Waterfront Plan. We believe that this is a significant change to the plan that warrants re-opening the public hearing on this matter at the Planning Commission's May 3, 2011 meeting.

The Alexandria Waterfront Committee is a unique City-wide assembly of Waterfront stakeholders established by City Council in 1989 to study and advise the City on Waterfront issues. We represent a wide cross-section of the community and have the best interests of the Waterfront at heart. Members include City residents, businesspersons, and members of selected business associations, non-profit organizations, and City commissions ranging from the Old Town Civic Association to the Chamber of Commerce.

We appreciate the responses that City staff provided in the April 22 staff memorandum to the Planning Commission, many of which addressed concerns outlined by the Waterfront Committee in its March 23 letter to Planning Director Faroll Hamer.

However, the Committee strongly disagrees with proposals to relocate the proposed Fitzgerald Square from the foot of King Street to Prince Street or elsewhere along the Waterfront. We agree with the staff assessment that the original proposal for Fitzgerald Square is the optimal design, and believe that it has the potential to be not only the centerpiece of the Waterfront, but one of the City's crown jewels. It would serve as a central hub tying together disparate pieces of existing Waterfront amenities with Old Town's commercial artery. Its adjoining pier would serve as a point of access to arriving water taxis, as well as a prominent wharf for historic vessels. The square would provide a celebratory sense of arrival on Alexandria's Waterfront both from the landside and the waterside.

Fitzgerald Square is the heart and soul of the Waterfront Plan. Without the central anchor that Fitzgerald Square provides, other worthwhile public improvements contemplated by the Plan will not have the meaningful focal point that is required to link them together. Quite simply, without a public square at the end of King Street, there is no Waterfront Plan.

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We do not endorse either of the Option A or Option B proposals to reconfigure the existing parking lot at 2 King Street. Neither of these options adequately opens the end of King Street, thus sustaining the limited public access and obstructed public views that currently exist at this location. More significantly, neither of these options creates the engaging civic plaza at the end of King Street that the original Fitzgerald Square supported.

We strongly encourage the City to continue negotiations with the Old Dominion Boat Club in an effort to realize the vision of Fitzgerald Square as originally proposed, especially when there is a reasonable alternative at hand by relocating the ODBC parking lot within the same block.

Furthermore, we recommend that the Planning Commission re-open the public hearing on this issue at its May 3 meeting. At the April 5 public hearing, Commissioners stated that they would consider reopening testimony only for substantive changes. The Waterfront Committee believes that any relocation of Fitzgerald Square, a central element of the original draft plan, constitutes a significant change, and that public comment on this specific proposal is warranted.

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We appreciate the opportunity to offer these comments on the Waterfront Small Area Plan. If you should have further questions regarding this matter, please contact me at 202-365-2927 (mobile) or natemacek@hotmail.com.

On behalf of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee and the broad Citywide constituencies that we represent, thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Nathan M. Macek, Chair
Alexandria Waterfront Committee

CC: Alexandria City Council
Alexandria Planning Commission
James K. Hartmann, City Manager
Bruce Johnson, Acting City Manager-designate
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